

Getting it together

Even married people can have romance

It's the blahs, the whatever-happened-to-our-romance blahs. That's what you're feeling as the warmth and freshness of spring remind you of those early days of your courtship.

Strange, isn't it? Here you are in the home you dreamed of, raising the family you hoped for, surrounded by nice friends, and still in love with your mate. Yet, something seems to be missing. Your sex life has become less frequent and much less interesting. The closeness you used to feel is all but gone. The relationship has become predictable and routine, comfortable and boring. It's almost as though you've lost interest in each other.

But that can't be it. You can still feel love for each other. You care about each other's welfare. Even the thought of living without your mate is painful. You still think of your marriage as precious and sacred. And you look forward to seeing each other at the end of your busy day.

Yet, there is that gnawing disappointment in the background. You need something that isn't there—something you used to have.

WHEN YOU THINK about it, it's not hard to discover that the challenge, the freshness, and the excitement of your early love has faded away. The roller-coaster fascination of finding, courting, and catching each other has been displaced by the is-there-isn't-there boredom of maintaining a comfortable, responsible, functional nest.

To feel the change can be frightening. Does it signal the failure of the love relationship? Or is it just a sign of becoming settled and mature? Is it the beginning of the end or just the end of the honeymoon?

Neither one. In contrast to the popular myth that romance can't last past the early stages of a marriage, the truth is that romance lasts as long as you are romantic. Routine and boredom are not the inevitable companions of an established marriage.

On the other hand, the loss of romance doesn't mean the relationship is dying. Romance is probably more of a luxury than an absolute necessity to successful marriage. But it's such a nice luxury. And it definitely adds to the strength and joy of the relationship.

Unfortunately, it's also fragile. It suffers greatly when it is neglected. It peters out quickly when priorities on careers, family, and hobbies leave little time and energy for romantic activities. It fades like a memory of carefree youth when it is stuffed in the back of the closet with the toys of childhood, excluded from the images of grown-up, responsible adults.

HOW CAN THERE be any room for romance in the popular model of the peaceful, "successful" marriage? Believing that comfort equals effective relating is poisonous to the risky, adventurous mood that goes with romance. Anxiety, conflict, petti-

ness, and jealousy are as much a part of romance as affection and intimacy. But these are seen as negative characteristics of mature marriages—imperfections to be eliminated.

Part of the problem is that adults still see romance as daydreaming blankly over your one true love. They think of their courtship and remember how obsessed they were, how totally involved they were with this one demanding pursuit. And they can't imagine maintaining that level of intensity while trying to be successful

in their career or in their roles as parent, friend, or housekeeper.

But married romance doesn't require the same amount of obsessed devotion that is demanded by courtship. It can be done in your spare time—if you don't give it too low a priority.

Successful married romantics actually schedule blocks of time for romantic activities. They treat it like a date. And they're careful to ensure that these dates occur in "prime time," not just when they are

exhausted from the demands of the rest of their lives.

Sometimes, these dates are spent at home. But kids are not allowed to participate or interrupt.

At times, a date may just be a long, luxurious rap session, a time for sharing thoughts and getting closer to one another. A date may be a sex party in which partners play with different atmospheres and different approaches to making love. It might be a time to try to resolve one of those nagging

issues that you haven't had time to discuss. Or a date could be an adventure, a time for taking risks, being childlike, and even irresponsible.

As long as the basic love relationship is healthy, most couples who try to spark romance in this way find that it's actually easier than they thought it would be.

Bob Trenez is a psychologist and marriage counselor in Rochester. Comments for Dr. Trenez may be sent to P.O. Box 64, Rochester 48063.

Volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of the Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly listings of agencies needing volunteers. Further information about these and over 200 agencies needing volunteer services may be obtained from the bureau, 642-7272.

KP AIDES—Volunteers are needed to assist in the kitchen preparation for the Birmingham Nutrition Site. Hot meals are served to shut-ins every day. The kitchen duties involve packing home bound food for drivers to deliver, serving a cafeteria style meal and clean up. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to about 1:30 p.m. one day a week.

CASEWORK AIDE—Travelers Aid Society needs mature persons to work at its Metropolitan Airport and

Greyhound Bus Station offices. Volunteers who are compassionate, have common sense and good judgment and can make sensible decisions can help clients who are lost, homeless or facing crisis situations. The time commitment requested is a four to six hour period on a regularly scheduled day between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. Especially needed are volunteers for evenings and weekends.

MEN—4th District Court, Royal Oak, needs volunteer sponsors for teenage and adult probationers. Training is provided.

HANDYMAN—Michigan Animal Rescue League in Pontiac has an urgent need for a man to do inside and outdoor repairs at the pet shelter. Also needed is someone who can repair chain link fence. Hours are at the volunteer's convenience.

Mary Nugent of Farmington and Joyce Mueller of Southfield are heading arrangements.

Sale to aid Catholic Central

A spring rummage sale, country kitchen and paper sale is planned by the Mother's Club of Catholic Central High

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